



NEWS FROM NOAA

NATIONAL OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

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NOAA ANNOUNCES HATCHERY POLICY, LISTING DETERMINATIONS FOR 16 SALMON SPECIES

NOAA Fisheries today issued its final policy for considering hatchery fish in making Endangered Species Act listing determinations. The agency also made a final listing decision for 16 salmon populations while deferring eleven others for six months for further scientific review. NOAA is the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

"This policy reinforces our commitment to protect naturally spawning salmon and their ecosystem," said retired Navy Vice Admiral Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Jr., Ph.D., under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. "A properly managed hatchery program can provide a great boost to natural populations of fish and we intend to use this as a key component of our overall salmon recovery efforts which, along with favorable ocean conditions, have contributed to record returns over the last few years."

The new policy is part of NOAA's response to a court ruling in 2001 directing NOAA Fisheries to consider hatchery fish in ESA listings. Under the policy, hatchery fish will be included in determining listing status in the context of their contribution to conserving natural self-sustaining populations, and will be listed if it is determined that the species as a whole warrants ESA protections. After reviewing more than 20,000 public comments, the agency revised the policy, first introduced last year, to emphasize the importance of natural spawning to species' health and to clarify the contribution hatcheries can make to population health.

"The goal here is to improve natural, self-sustaining salmon runs," said Bob Lohn, NOAA Fisheries Northwest Regional administrator. "This is not simply a numbers game, but a scientific-based policy to use a well-managed hatchery program as another tool in salmon recovery."

NOAA Fisheries also announced its final decision to retain the listings of 15 Pacific salmon populations, and to add lower Columbia coho as a threatened species. In addition, the central California coast coho was changed from "threatened" to "endangered" status, which better reflects California's endangered listing under state law. The agency has extended for six months the listing decision on Oregon coast coho and 10 species of steelhead trout while it conducts further scientific review.

NOAA Fisheries Service is dedicated to protecting and preserving our nation's living marine resources and their habitat through scientific research, management and enforcement. NOAA Fisheries Service provides effective stewardship of these resources for the benefit of the nation, supporting coastal communities that depend upon them, and helping to provide safe and healthy seafood to consumers and recreational opportunities for the American public.

NOAA, an agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce, is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources.

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On the Web:

NWR, more details: <http://www.nwr.noaa.gov/AlseaResponse/20040528/index.html>

NOAA: <http://www.noaa.gov>

NOAA Fisheries: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov>